

ULTIMO DRAGON! GREAT SASUKE! Ohtani! LOS DESTRUCTORES! Psicosis! La PARKA!
JUSHIN THUNDER LIGER! LEON NEGRO! and other stuff I saw and heard this week!

Howdy!

Welcome to DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #14!

I got the J-Crown from the amazing Dams and watched it immediately and I watched a batch of Extreme Southwest (tm-JDW) which I'll get to some of (HELL! It's too much for one week if I try to figure out all of it.)

- (With the exception of the fractured skull) The J-Crown RULES! The highlight is the Ohtani/Ultimo Dragon match which is the most fun I've had watching a match in a while. The key to this match is that Ultimo and Ohtani are about at the same rung at this point, with Shinjiro being the next big thing and capable of beating the big boys (Benoit in the WCW Cruiserweight final) and Dragon being the legend and being on a bit of resurgence, the feel of the match is that it is up for grabs (having done away with the perfunctory token matches for Negro Casas (who looked great!) and Motegi which were never in doubt.) Ohtani hits all of his springboard spots (more than I've ever seen him hit in one match) and Ultimo Dragon has all of his patented highspots- the assorted ranas, Asai moonsaults in and out of the ring. The difference for the Dragon is that he has REALLY hit the formula of combining the grace of being a great Luchadore with the stiffness of being a great Japanese style wrestler. The difference for Ohtani is that he has hit the formula for combining the New Japan Jr Heavyweight style with the UWF shoot-style. So all this in the ring at the same time delivers the wrestling goods. Ohtani has mastered the art of the big sell, with my favorite thing being his Crawling Escape (tm-DHR) from the opponent's finisher, which I first noticed after Benoit's first Ohtani Killer Powerbomb (tm-JDW) in their match for the WCW belt. After some submission holds early (or maybe late, I join Ollie in desiring the commercial uncut version of this baby) the mountain of near pinfalls begin. The timing is everything for all these. They pause between near pins and explode into the suplex, hurricanrana, or powerbomb variation so as to make it look like the finisher; the first nearpin- an Ohtani Tiger Suplex- is the best because it had the great 2 and 98/100ths count by Dragon. By mid match, the excitement level is already at a feverpitch. The last quarter is variations of the young punk Ohtani getting fired up and being thwarted by UD, the wily veteran. Dragon is on the turnbuckle as Ohtani rushes him three or four times, each time eating some Dragon fists. Ohtani finally gets UD in the position for the Superplex, only to be reversed into a very fat facebuster. Ultimo finishes him off with a running powerbomb and a great match comes to a close. This match RULED, but Liger/Ohtani RULED MORE. I would put it between Benoit/Ohtani and Liger/Ohtani. Ohtani better have the J-Crown for a while in 97 because he is becoming the absolute KING of the junior heavyweights. Another great match was the final, though it was marred by the injury sustained by the Great Sasuke.

Ultimo Dragon should just breakdown and join Michinoku Pro because the most beautiful 70 or 80 seconds of this whole wrestling year was when UD and the Great Sasuke are running the ropes Lucha Libre style, hitting all the graceful armdrags and head scissors. His Lucha leanings

would guarantee more of the same in the lucha-crazy Michinoku Pro. This match was beautiful on a lot of levels when you get past the obviously supergraceful lucha libre areas. The speed that UD and Sasuke mat wrestle, which was almost the entire first half of the match, is pretty awe-inspiring. Hell, Sasuke is so quick and precise doing suplexes and knee-bars that he can definitely join Liger in the Great Highflyers Who Are Even Better When They Are Grounded club. Ditto Ultimo Dragon who is so fluid that he is a true joy to behold. The highspots were neat though. During the exchange of Quebradas onto the floor, notice that both of them come close to destroying a fan. Sasuke comes very close taking out a five year old in the front row. (talk about early childhood trauma). The most infamous highspot looks to me more like a botched senton than a botched hurricanrana. I thought he just didn't get enough air in his Senton and couldn't land flat on UD, thus the unfortunate result. On a lighter note, I hope that they continue the bizarre Hot-Chicks-With-The-Eight-Belts procession for each J-Crown defense. It was a true Flair-inspired move, in that brilliant goofy way that says WRESTLING!

Jushin Thunder Liger looked impressive in the 2 minutes he was in the tournament. I'm guessing the released suplexes he did on Dragon will be a new thing for him, and they looked pretty hellish. Negro Casas looked great against Ohtani. He had cool boots, long pants and has let his hair grow out. The highlight of that match was the springboard headscissors by Casas. Motegi looked like Motegi, but with a beard. El Samurai is creeping back up on me again, because I hadn't seen him wrestle in a while and had forgotten how cool he is in the ring. His match against Sasuke was the third best and came very close being second. In the middle of all this, Dan the Beast Severn wrestled Fujiwara in a very unUFC style match. Severn wrestled his almost-effective mutant pro style. It didn't help that Severn did five backdrop drivers in a row and Fujiwara kicked out of four of them. That doesn't make Fujiwara look good, it just makes Severn's version appear to be 1/5th as good as Steve Williams'.

- I watched six AAA handhelds from Dams and they were as hit and miss as all AAA shows are. The Main Events are spectacular and the undercard is pretty good to spotty to horrible. The best tape was the one from 10/16 with a GREAT match between Jungla/Leon Negro vs Psicosis/Fobia. It started with a perfect first Caida of Lucha style matwork, with Jungla- who I had never had an opinion of- really showing adeptness, hanging with Psicosis on the mat. Leon Negro continues to impress me with speed and all-around spunkiness. He is developing into the next Super Calo- with an even more straight forward style which will work well with his flashier counterparts. The second and third Caidas moved smoothly into more garbage spots, which made sense for the match because it built to the insanely hot (screwy) ending. Los Pandilleros vs Los Destruktores was a GREAT brawl with the Pandys really getting their asses handed to them by the older guys in the goofy masks. Pandy #1 blades like a freak and Arce and the boys just stomp them into oblivion. I'm going crazy because I'm starting to sense that one of the Pandilleros is the highflyer of the group, he just hasn't let loose yet. (Someone tell Dave Fields that I'm finally sold on Los Destruktores and he can sleep easy now.)) The first main event was hilarious with Pierroth doing the big bully act with Misterio Jr, even to the point of pants-ing the lil fella. This was a real dog's breakfast of a wrestling match, the pinnacle being Konnan teeing eggs off of Cibernetico's stomach with a golf club. It was Surreal SouthWest for a minute there. The second Main Event was Halloween (mascara vs mascara with Thunderbird), which I haven't

watched, but I'm guessing will be pretty choice. - The 7/14 hh had a REALLY choice La Parka vs Misterioso match. Misterioso is SO underrated, and La Parka is so GOOD that this match was quite interesting. It stayed on the mat for most of the match with La Parka throwing in a wacky highspot here and there. Very fast-paced, very psychologically sound, thanks to the steady hand of Misterioso guiding this baby along. La Parka is so freakishly off-beat even when he is seriously wrestling that I wonder if his gimmick is hiding the true jewel of modern lucha libre from the rest of the world. Juventud and Jerry Estrada drag Cibernetico along for the ride on the same card, taking on the aforementioned Leon Negro, the large and TICK-like Tinieblas, Jr and Blue Demon, Jr. Juvnetud and Estrada do what they do best, make their opponents look like wrestling machines, and Juventud gets in some offense to satiate my insane need for cool looking legdrops.:) Cibernetico sucks, but hey! lemme try to say something new! The Main Event- a double chain match with Misterio, Psicosis and Super Calo- I didn't watch yet, either.

NEXT WEEK: The rest of the AAA handhelds that I watched! The two AAA main events I haven't watched! The best of Jushin Thunder Liger tape which I'm 80% done watching! DREAMSLAM II (I swear!)! and fistloads of other stuff!

NANIWA~!

- Dean Rasmussen, Juventudiac!